

**DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES  
COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON MONDAY 17 MARCH 2025 FROM 7:00 PM**

**Present:** Councillors Gregory Alderman (Chair), Nicholas Kotarski (Vice-Chair), Louise O’Riordan (Mayor), Sally Kimondo (Deputy Mayor), Peter Hollick, Matthew Brennan, Liz Jones, Johnson Tamara, Michelle Henderson, Richard Attwell, and Phillip Crawley.

**In Attendance:** Paul Hodson (Town Clerk and Chief Executive), Lisa Scheder (Head of Corporate Services and Responsible Financial Officer), Georgia Pearson (Democratic Services Manager) and Rachel Connor (Marketing and Communications Officer)

**Public:** Nil

**086/25 - Apologies for Absence**

Councillors John Gurney and Wendy Bater

**087/25 - Declarations of Interest**

There were no specific declarations of interest

**088/25 - Public Question Time**

There were no questions from the public

**089/25 - To approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2025**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 20 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

**090/25 - Action Tracker – to receive updates on previous actions**

Members received and noted the Action Tracker summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor Tamara inquired about the 40th Anniversary exhibition and whether historical items from Dunstable would be included. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive explained that this would be considered.

**091/25 - Finance Report**

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report provided to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.1. To note the revenue budget position for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 January 2025.
- 1.2. To note the current balance of the Council's earmarked reserves as at 31 January 2025.
- 1.4. To recommend to Full Council the appointment of the Internal Auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.
- 1.5. To note current investments.

**091.1/25 - Financial Regulations**

The Head of Corporate Services briefed members on the amended Financial Regulations which were based on The National Association of Local Council's (NALC) updated Model Financial Regulations.

The following addition and amendment to the previous Financial Regulations were noted:

Additional Legislation "Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them."

'Withdrawal from any earmarked reserves shall be agreed by the relevant committee'. This was a change to the previous practice, whereby any request for expenditure from a specific reserve relevant to a committee other than Finance and General Purposes, was required to be referred for approval to Finance and General Purposes.

Officers advised Members that any other matters, for example creating or amending ear-marked reserves, would still require referral for approval.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.3. To approve the amended Financial Regulations.

**092/25 - Compliance and Facilities Report**

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report.

Councillor Crawley inquired whether the 10% efficiency saving had been due to the loss of Creasey Park. Officers confirmed that the saving had been due to the loss. Councillor Crawley then requested that the efficiency percentage across all council departments be provided. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive undertook to provide a written response after the meeting.

**Action:** The Head of Corporate Services and The Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

Following the meeting, Members received an update from officers providing a conclusion from the consultant:

There has been some progress made since the previous footprinting exercise, but this has been constrained by finance and the need to focus on matters such as the unwinding of the Creasey Park CFC arrangements.

On a like for like basis, Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from energy have fallen by approximately 10% over the two years, and although there may be some special circumstances associated with Priory House, they seem likely to fall further with the upgraded boiler at Grove House. There are still some relatively straightforward measures that could be taken, that should enable the downwards trajectory of emissions to continue.

Councillor Alderman provided Members with a brief update on the status of the carbon working group. The working group had identified a couple of actions to be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee at a later date.

#### **093/25 - Tender for Waste Management**

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** To award the 3-year waste services contract to Contractor A, commencing 1 April 2025.

#### **094/25 - Marketing and Communications Report**

The Marketing and Communications officer summarised the report.

Since the report was written, the April edition of Talk of the Town had been designed and was in the final proof stages before print production, ready to be distributed on 4 April 2025.

Councillor Kotarski mentioned the negative responses that had been left under the social media post regarding the installation of wooden sculptures around the Town. Councillor Crawley noted that when grants and funding are provided for such projects to enhance the Town, social media posts should clearly communicate that to avoid negative responses from residents.

#### **094.1/25 - Marketing and Communications Strategy Report**

The Marketing and Communications officer briefly summarised the report.

Councillor Hollick inquired whether there would be any relevant guidelines for Councillors to follow within the Strategy. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive

advised that the Council had a social media policy outlining how everyone, including Councillors, should communicate. The new Marketing and Communications Strategy reflects the tone and messaging that Town Council staff would use in official communications and that it would not be appropriate for officers to dictate the tone of voice that Councillors should use.

Councillor Alderman asked about the possibility of the Town Council having a WhatsApp broadcasting group which could be used to communicate with residents; it was advised that the concept is under investigation.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** To approve the proposed Marketing and Communications Strategy for Dunstable Town Council.

### **095/25 - Referral Reports from Other Committees**

Members received and discussed the reference up from Community Services Committee which was summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

Councillor O'Riordan inquired whether qualifications to host a street party should be obtained before providing the funds. It was advised that Central Bedfordshire Council had a process in place for providing free street closures, and the Town Council had a process in place to effectively establish this.

Councillor Jones proposed an amendment to the recommendation to provide flexibility on the timing of the street parties.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Alderman and the recommendation was

**AMENDED:** To approve the spend of £1,000 from the 2025/26 civic hospitality budget for street parties to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, providing flexibility about the days which the Council fund the street parties on.

It was then proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** To agree the proposed amendment.

Members received and discussed a reference up from Personnel Sub-Committee which was summarised by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the amended Dignity at Work policy be approved.
- ii) That the Safer Recruitment policy be approved and adopted.
- iii) That officers seek advice from the Council's HR

advisors regarding any additions that could be made to the Dignity at Work Policy regarding how the policy relates to Members and make appropriate recommendations to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.

#### **096/25 - Reports from Outside Organisations:**

##### Citizen's Advice Management Committee – Councillor Attwell

Nothing to report

##### Dunstable International Town Twinning Association - Town Mayor and Councillors Hollick and Kenson Gurney

Nothing to report

##### Hospice at Home Management Committee – Councillor Wendy Bater

Councillor Jones updated Members on behalf of Councillor Bater that the organisation was currently planning events for the coming year to help fundraise for ongoing activities. The organisation now have 30 volunteers working alongside approximately 28 clients.

##### Ashton Almshouses Charity – Councillors O’Riordan and Alderman

Councillor Alderman informed Members that everything was running smoothly. The installation of motion-sensitive lights outside the building was benefiting the residents, as the rooms were no longer constantly lit up throughout the night.

##### Ashton Schools Foundation – Councillors Hollick and Alderman

Councillor Hollick informed Members that Manshead had been visited to review how the funds donated from the sale of the middle school had been utilised. A notice was currently being prepared to acknowledge that the money was donated by the Ashton Schools Foundation.

##### Chew’s Foundation – Councillors Brennan and Kenson Gurney

Nothing to report

##### Poor’s Land Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones informed Members that the organisation was about to enter the period during which they will distribute money to approximately 80 residents who are entitled to the annual Maundy Thursday money.

##### Lockington Charity and Marshe Charity – Councillors Kenson Gurney and Jones

Councillor Jones informed Members that the external works at the ladies' lodges in Church Street had now been completed. Additionally, some tree works had been carried out by Central Bedfordshire Council as the branches had been touching the property and the roof. Due to concerns raised about the fence erected in the Old Palace Lodge car park, it was noted that the fence had been lowered to half the height with some assistance.

##### Dunstable and District Scout Council Executive – Councillor Kotarski

Councillor Kotarski advised members the organisation would be hosting the St.

Georges Day parade and renewal of promises where they will be marching through the town.

#### **097/25 - Motion to exclude press and public**

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and therefore, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

#### **098/25 - Creasey Park final Finance Report, including Bad Debt**

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:**

1.1. To note the final financial position for Creasey Park Community Football Centre and approve the movement of balances in the reserves for Creasey Park Community Football Centre to the Open Spaces Improvements Reserve.

1.2. To approve the write off of two bad debts relating to the closure of Creasey Park Community Football Centre.

#### **099/25 - Grove House Building Works Report**

The Head of Corporate Services summarised the report to members.

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** To approve waiving Financial Regulations section 5.10 iii, to allow commencement of urgent Grove House building repair works.

**100/25 - Date of the next meeting – Monday 16 June 2025 at 7.00 pm**

Councillor Alderman thanked officers for their continued support throughout his year as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. He wished the future Chair all the best in the role and thanked all Councillors for their support.

**The meeting closed at 8:20 PM**